

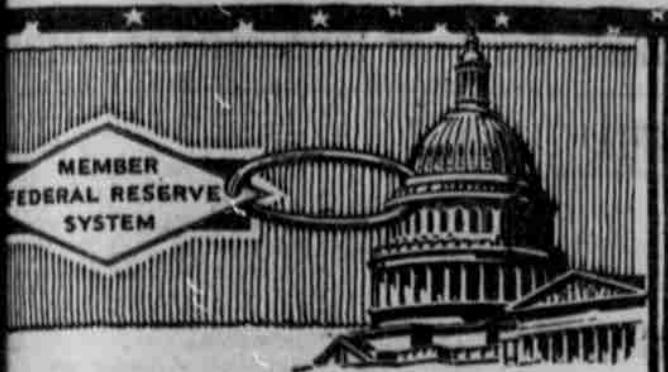
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How the War Came to America ---A Bit of Diplomatic History

By the Committee of Public Information

Even at this late day there are some Americans who have lost sight of the important facts which lead up to the declaration of a state of war between the United States and the Imperial German Government. To refresh the memory of Americans and to refute the slanders of those whose heart is with the German cause this series of articles by the committee on Public Information is being presented. The next issue will carry the history of German transgressions of the laws of nations further.

In the meantime the attacks of the German submarines upon the lives and property of American citizens had gone on; the protests of our Government were now sharp and ominous; and this Nation was rapidly being drawn into a state of war. As the President said in Topeka, on February 2, 1916:

"We are not going to invade any Nation's right. But suppose, my fellow countrymen, some nation should invade our rights. What then? * * * I have come here to tell you that the difficulties of our foreign policy * * * daily increase in number and intricacy and in danger, and I would be derelict to my duty to you if I did not deal with you in these matters with the utmost candor, and tell you what it may be necessary to use the force of the United States to do." The next day at St. Louis, he repeated his warning: "The danger is not from within, gentlemen, it is from without; and I am bound to tell you that that danger is constant and immediate, not because there has been any change in our international relationships within recent weeks or months, but because the dangers come with every turn of events."

The break would have come sooner if our Government had not been restrained by the hope that saner counsels might still prevail in Germany. For it would well known to us that the German people had to a very large extent been kept in ignorance of many of the secret crimes of their Government against us. And the pressure of a faction of German public opinion less hostile to this country was shown when their Government acquired to some degree in our demands, at the time of the Sussex outrage, and for nearly a year maintained at least a pretense of observing the pledge they had made to us. The tension was abated.

While the war spirit was growing in some sections of our Nation, there was still no widespread desire to take part in the conflict abroad; for the tradition of noninterference in Europe's political affairs was too deeply rooted in our national life to be easily overturned. Moreover, two other considerations strengthened our Government in its efforts to remain neutral in this war. The first was our traditional sense of responsibility toward all the republics of the New World. Throughout the crisis our Government was in constant communication with the countries of Central and South America. They, too, preferred the ways of peace. And there was a very obvious obligation upon us to safeguard their interests with our own. The second consideration, which had been so often developed in the President's speeches, was the hope that by keeping aloof from the bitter passions abroad, by preserving untainted here the holy ideals of civilized intercourse between nations, we might be free at the end of this war to bind up the wounds of the conflict, to be the restorers and the rebuilders of the wrecked structure of the world.

All these motives held us back, but it was not long until we were beset by further complications. We soon had reasons to believe that the recent compliance of the German Government had not been made to us in good faith, and was only temporary; and by the end of 1916 it was plain that our neutral status had again been made unsafe through the over-increasing aggressiveness of the German autocracy. There was general agreement here with the statement of our President, on October 26, 1916, that the conflict was the last great involving the world in which we would

remain neutral.

It was in this frame of mind, fearing we might be drawn into the war if it did not soon come to an end, that the President began the preparation of his note, asking the belligerent powers to define their war aims. But before he completed it, the world was surprised by the peace move of the German Government—an identical note on behalf of the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey, sent through neutral powers on December 12, 1916, to the governments of the Allies, proposing negotiations for peace. While expressing the wish to the end this war—"a catastrophe which thousands of years of common civilization was unable to prevent and which injures the most precious achievement of humanity"—the greater portion of the note was couched in terms that gave small hope of lasting peace. Boasting of German conquests, "the glorious deeds of our armies," the note implanted in neutral minds the belief that it was the purpose of the Imperial German Government to insist upon such conditions as would leave all Central Europe under German dominance and so built up an Empire which would menace the whole liberal world.

Moreover, the German proposal was accompanied by a thinly veiled threat to all neutral nations; and from a thousand sources, official and unofficial, the word came to Washington that unless the neutrals used their influence to bring the war to an end on terms dictated from Berlin, Germany and her allies would consider themselves henceforth free from any obligations to respect the rights of neutrals. The Kaiser ordered the neutrals to exert pressure on the Entente to bring the war to an abrupt end, of to beware of the consequences. Clear warning were brought to our Government that if the German peace move should not be successful, the submarines would be unleashed for a more intense and ruthless war upon all commerce.

On the 18th of December, the President dispatched his note to all the belligerent powers, asking them to define their war aims. There was still hope in our minds that the mutual suspicions between the warring powers might be decreased, and the menace of future German aggression and dominance be removed, by finding a guaranty of good faith in a League of Nations. There was a chance that by creation of a league as part of the peace negotiations; the war could now be brought to an end before our Nation was involved. Two statements issued to the press by our Secretary of State, upon the day the note was dispatched, threw a clear light on the seriousness with which our Government viewed the crisis.

From this point, events moved rapidly. The powers of the Entente replied to the German peace note. Neutral nations took action on the note of the President, and from both belligerents replied to this note were soon in our hands.

The German reply was evasive—in accord with their traditional performances for diplomacy behind closed doors. Refusing to state to the world their terms, Germany and her allies merely proposed a conference. They adjourned all discussion of any plan for a league of peace until after hostilities should end.

The response of the Entente Powers was frank and in harmony with our principal purpose. Many questions raised in the statement of their aims were so purely European in character as to have small interest

for us; but our great concern in Europe was the lasting restoration of peace, and it was clear that this was also the chief interest of the Entente Nations. As to the wisdom of some of the measures they proposed toward this end, we might differ in opinion, but the tend of their proposals was the establishment of just frontiers based on the right of all nations, the small as well as the great to decide their own destinies.

(Continued Next Week)

CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Regular Services: First Sunday of each month—Low Mass at 8:00 a. m., High Mass, 10:00 a. m.

All other Sundays—High Mass at 10:00 a. m.

Hospital Chapel—Mass daily at 8:30 a. m.

Saturdays—Catechism, 3:00 p. m.

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